

Dear Helen,

4/29/85

Your father mentioned that you are a Phillies fan. This and the strange circumstances of my present life touched off the enclosed, which tells you a bit about baseball and kids in Phila. circa World War I. (I still recall seeing the 29th Division marching along Broad St. just north of Baker Park when it returned from France. Probably 1919.)

There remains an enormous interest in the JFK assassination. While writing your father I got calls from Dallas and Colorado, the first from a friend I've been helping with his work and the second from a man whose books didn't reach him after a week. His wife is that anxious to get and read them. This interest will never die, and it shouldn't.

Unfortunately, however, most of the writing has been irresponsible and has not really informed the people. None of the theoretical works is dependable.

It may be a little optimistic to expect much more by way of disclosure from the Freedom of Information Act because the government has been resisting with more and more success and Reagan has already packed the courts with his political activists, people who disgrace the word and concept of "judge." Collectively they have turned FOIA around, too long and detailed a story for now.

I'll take time for my own Doubleday story of 20 years ago, however and, anticipating it, suggest that when you get their critique and suggestions, ask if they can suggest a publisher. That's how I got to Doubleday.

A friend who was in movie production with whom I stayed when I was in New York sent me to a Pocket Books executive he knew. That man was out of town and his office sent me to another man, Eugene Prakapis. He asked me how long I'd be in town, when I was returning, etc., and I told him. A day or two later, as I was about to leave NYC, I phoned my friend's home and his wife told me that Prakapis was very very anxious to be in touch with me. When I left the phone in the lower Manhattan bar to get change a utilities man had it and was in touch with his office and making extensive notes. Took very long and I was parked, which meant it was dangerous to move the car I'm still driving, so I had to sweat it out. Prakapis was excited, so excited that he told me that with my background and their expertise Whitewash, the first book, would be the year's Green Malt Jungle. They'd published it the year before and it sold more copies than any other book. Was I excited! He told me to see him when I returned in a few days, he had to go to Boston and the ms was being passed around. He'd taken it home and read it immediately!

When I returned he was not happy but he was quite honest and he told me the truth, as Doubleday ultimately did. He recounted the story of Calories Don't Count, a fraudulent book they'd published. (They'd fired the man responsible and he had started his own publishing house by then.) Boris Shindin, then PB head, feared that he might be indicted and he believed, undoubtedly correctly, that if he published Whitewash "that would be the red flag before the charging bull." Direct and accurate quote. I've forgotten none of that. BJ would have been inspired to get him. (Others were convicted but he wasn't charged.) DJ=Dept. Justice.

But they all liked and respected the book and would like to help place it. Of course I grabbed at that. He then told me that it is he who passed on reprinting what Doubleday wanted in paperback, so he'd phone them. I offered to leave his office and he told me not to. He told me he was going to ask that Sam Vaughn, Eisenhower's and Nixon's editor, read it. He made the arrangements while I was listening and when I offered to take the ms there he said he'd use their messenger.

A week later I had Doubleday's letter. It included, approximately, "If you had gone farther afield we'd have been tempted." That struck me as strange language so

a few days later, when I was again in NYC, I phoned the woman who'd written me and asked if she could amplify what she'd written. It was cryptic but clear enough: "Our decision was not editorial and not easy to arrive at." They'd had a big, big-brass confab because they, too, wanted to ~~xxx~~ publish it. But they, too, feared the government. As apparently every publisher did.

But I had no bad experience with any editor. All liked it and some wanted to help. Some were even critical of their bosses.

Perhaps you can have the kind of luck I had, without the political liability of the content of my book, which did not go afield. So ask for help when you hear from them. Won't hurt and might just help. Many editors appear to want to see books they like printed even if they don't do the printing.

For your family and its inability to comprehend rejection of a liked book, another story. Dell and its subsidiary Dial rejected my first book three times and then, after I published it, came to me to reprint. It was their only best-selling work of nonfiction for some six months. They didn't change a word even though I'd asked for editing. The contract called for my offer of my next book. They rejected it and then, encouraged by sales, came to me for it, too.

To illustrate the prevalent mendacity: the contract was for a quarter million first-print on the first book. They admitted two reprints and by accident I got a copy of a third, never included on their accountings. Yet they claim to have sold only about half the first print and I never got another cent from them. On the second, only the advance. Suing with an air-tight case costs more than the litigation can yield. And they know it. ...

You ask about the other books. I'll enclose a price list, with corrections of escalated mailing fees. The first book now exists in a quality, actual-size xerox, which is rather costly. I did not publish Oswald in New Orleans, and from it also got nothing. The few copies I've obtained in recent years, and I rarely let anyone know I have any so I can save it for scholars and colleges, are \$25. It was a 95¢ original paperback and another PB disaster. Parallax, which had just produced The Autobiography of Malcolm X, published it after bad editing. PB then distributed their books, but would not touch the subject. I learned this latter, but originally I was offered co-publisher, with a 50-50 split on the profits. Without good distribution there can be no profits, and there weren't any. ...

For some years I attended the annual conventions of ABA and met the publishers who feared. Almost without exception they apologized, congratulated me on bringing it out myself, and acknowledged that they could have made a pot with it. I did make it a best-seller without a cent to spend on advertising or promotions.

The "net" is for bookstores, from whom we do hear. That means there is no discount and the cost is such that there cannot be. It is a durable job, with a strong binding, etc. The other listed books are at their original prices. I did not do Frame-Up myself but I did get most of the remainders and have them also at the original price. ...

Your father is a friend of an old and dear friend and may come here with him some time in the future. Feel free to join them so far as I'm concerned unless it is the time that my friend Joe has agreed we'll talk about something he's not ever been able to talk about, his recollections of the pogroms. He's agree to talk with me on tape on the chance I can open him up. Bitburg-time makes that appropriate... Or come yourself sometime if you'd like, with husband, family, etc. Less than an hour from I95 in Phila. and you might pick it up closer.

You are young. Keep trying, don't get discouraged and it'll happen.

Good luck!

Harold

April 22, 1985

Dear Mr. Weisberg,

Thank you so much for sending me *Post Mortem*. I can see that I have miles to go before I sleep just reading your book, let alone worrying what's to become of mine. There's a great deal to plow through there and surely it will take a lot of careful reading to grasp and to remember, so I thought it best to write and thank you now rather than waiting till I finish.

As my father, Sylvan Friedenberg, told you in his letter, I have been following the assassination story since it began. I'm not an investigator, just a very interested reader...and of course I tell the story to whomever will listen. There are a lot of us out here, a lot of people you, and other real investigators, *do* reach. I've read whatever I could get my hands on, from Whitewash and Rush To Judgement through Josiah Thompson's Six Seconds To Dallas and on and on, and I suppose on a very, very local level I'm regarded to know a lot about it, though everything I know is very second hand.

I have a great deal of admiration for those of you who have believed in something so much you just wouldn't let go of it. Most people's concentration level would not permit that sort of dedication. I'm only sorry you've gotten so little return on your investment of time and energy. Of course, you've put a real crack in the door of government secrecy, and surely that has to mean something--if not as it applies to JFK, then perhaps sometime down the road a little, the next time it becomes truly important. The Freedom of Information act hopefully will keep a few things from falling into the little cracks where they seem to *accidentally* get stuffed. And while maybe the doors you've opened will shed little light on finding the solution to a 20 year old crime--perhaps, if someone, the next time, could get in there early on...who knows?

I will read the book, carefully, and then, if I may, I'll be in touch again. I simply wanted to let you know how appreciative I am for getting it.

page 1

By the way, thank you for your advice on the pitfalls of publishing. I'm not yet in the position of having to worry about cash advances...I'm only up to the part where I need to find a publisher. Doubleday had it, and they liked it well enough to pass it on up the ladder, but just recently, I'm told, they rejected it--don't know why yet. They liked it well enough to offer to critique it, and so I haven't gotten it back. However, since that was the first place I've sent it, I just finished writing it in November, I can't say I'm ready to get discouraged.

It amuses me a little bit that the people around me, family and friends, are so upset by the turn down and it's so hard to explain to people who haven't been through it that Writing is the only career in the world where rejection is the norm, and acceptance the exception. I try to explain to them the concept of the *good* rejection versus the *bad*, but they only shake their heads.

From my point of view, Doubleday's reaction was a good one. They did like it, they did take some time with it...and what that tells me is that if they don't want to publish it, someone else will. Anyway, for the first time, I see that possibility. I'm told by those who've read it that it's a good book and well written, and last year at the St. David Writers Conference it won me an award as the most promising new writer there, (naturally, the other newcomer was quite disappointed...!) Anyway, I'm just going to hang in there and we'll see what we see.

I *would* like to get the other books in your Whitewash series, all of them. *Whitewash* #1 was probably out of print when I read it, and the copy I found was an old dog-eared one that I found at a flea market...which didn't prevent me from getting a lot from the story, it's just that I had to prop up a few of the pages manually. I'd love to have a good copy for my library, especially since I have a fairly good size collection of assassination material. The others in the series I never have seen. But I was a little befuddled by your pricing list. Next to the first *Whitewash* it says "Net 25.00" Does that mean for the whole series? Or am I misreading it? I'm assuming, I guess, that it

meant the price for all except Post Mortem which you know I already have. Either let me know, or just send me the books and a bill.

Again, I'd like to thank you for taking the time to write to my dad, and for sending me an autographed copy...and perhaps, most of all, for taking the time to do the leg work that other, more official agencies should have undertaken a long, long time ago. I'll hope to hear from you and I wish you a great deal of luck.

Sincerely,

Ellen Cohen



Ellen F. Cohen
1927 Lafayette Road
Gladwyne, PA 19035